

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

A network node includes a system enabling high-speed protection switching of traffic between respectively associated working and protection channels of a communications network. The node comprises a multi-stage switch fabric, an interface, and a toggle. The multi-stage switch fabric has a first stage including a respective plurality of stage-1 switch elements. The interface is operatively coupled to a set of one or more stage-1 switch elements, and is adapted to aggregate the working and protection channels of the communications network on a selected one of the set of stage-1 switch elements. Finally, the toggle is adapted to control the selected stage-1 switch element to map traffic between a middle stage of the switch fabric and a selected one of the working and protection channels.

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